

Gorbachev Voices 'Alarm' On Lithuanian Party Split

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MOSCOW, Dec. 21 — President Mikhail S. Gorbachev said today that a decision by the Lithuanian Communist Party to sever its links with the national party raised "concern and alarm," and that the Central Committee would hold an emergency meeting in the next few days to discuss the issue.

Mr. Gorbachev, who is leader of the party as well as head of state, had put heavy pressure on the party leadership in Lithuania not to take the move, and today he called the Communist Party leader in Lithuania to express his displeasure.

The Lithuanian party leader, Algirdas Brazauskas, told a congress of the newly independent Communist Party of Lithuania in the republic's capital, Vilnius, that Mr. Gorbachev called him this afternoon to verify that the organization had indeed declared its independence on Wednesday.

Mr. Brazauskas said that when he confirmed the news, and told the Soviet leader that 84 percent of the congress delegates had voted for the split, "the conversation became very strained."

Mr. Gorbachev angrily warned that the Lithuanian decision would cause a "chain reaction," he said.

Fear of a Chain Reaction

The Lithuanian organization is the first local party to defy the Kremlin by declaring independence. Earlier this month the parliament in Vilnius rejected Moscow's appeals and voted to abolish the Communist Party's constitutionally guaranteed monopoly on power in the republic.

Both acts of defiance are likely to be repeated soon in other republics where resistance to Moscow's control is strong, including the neighboring Baltic republics of Latvia and Estonia.

Mr. Brazauskas said the Soviet leader informed him that he would meet immediately with the Communist Party's ruling Politburo to set a date for a session of the policy-making Central Committee.

The new independent party has already emphasized that one of its top goals is to create an independent, democratic state of Lithuania. Mr. Brazauskas has even spoken publicly about the possibility of secession from the Soviet Union, a notion condemned by Mr. Gorbachev.

Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia were independent countries from the end of World War I until 1939, when a pact between Hitler and Stalin on spheres of influence paved the way for Soviet annexation the following year.

The Kremlin acknowledged this year that the annexation was illegal, but said the republics were still legally part of the Soviet Union. That assertion is rejected by the Baltic republics.

It is uncertain what action the party leadership in Moscow could take against the Lithuanian Communists. Most leaders of political organizations in Lithuania say they do not believe the Kremlin would use force.

"It's difficult to imagine, and I would say highly improbable, that while Gorbachev is talking about noninterference in Eastern Europe that he would send tanks into Vilnius," said Arvydas Juozaitis, a leader of Sajudis, a grassroots political organization supported by a majority of Lithuanians. "Maybe they will be smart and decide to recognize the Lithuanian party."

"No one in the party is worried," said a high-ranking Lithuanian Communist Party official in Vilnius, who asked not to be named. "Everyone thinks that an outside party has no right to interfere in the affairs of the Lithuanian Communist Party, and as of yesterday, the

Communist Party of the Soviet Union is an outside party to us."

Mr. Gorbachev announced that the Politburo would call the emergency meeting of the Central Committee at the end of today's session of the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies.

'An Enormous New Danger'

"The Politburo met today to discuss the question and decided to bring this issue before a Central Committee plenary meeting," he said.

He said that several Communist deputies had approached him to voice concern over the Lithuanian party's split. Mr. Gorbachev read aloud a note from one deputy saying the action showed "a new turn in a separatist tendency in the country, an enormous new danger for the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet multinational state."

In an expression of consternation over the Lithuanian Communists' decision to disregard his personal appeals, Mr. Gorbachev also sent a message to delegates at the Lithuanian congress informing them of the special session to assess the "split of the Lithuanian Communist Party from the Soviet Communist Party."

Ideological Fissures

Mr. Gorbachev is struggling to hold together a party that is increasingly divided along ideological lines. In the last several weeks, he has privately reprimanded deputies from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia for pressing him and the congress to expand autonomy in the Baltic region, saying that their actions jeopardize the success of his program to revitalize the Soviet economy and political system.

Mr. Brazauskas has been summoned to Moscow several times by Mr. Gorbachev and reprimanded for supporting actions by his republic's parliament and party to wrench control of local affairs from the central authorities.

Four political parties in addition to the Communists are now registered in Lithuania.

Although Mr. Gorbachev has tolerated moves by Soviet allies in Eastern Europe to abolish the Communist Party's primacy, he quashed attempts to raise the issue at the current session of the national congress.

Recognizing the renegade party would present serious complications for the Moscow party leadership. To begin with, it would encourage similar moves in other regions, including Armenia and Georgia as well as the other Baltic republics.

Recognition would also be hindered by the decision of the minority of delegates at the Lithuanian Communist Congress to remain part of the Soviet Communist Party.



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The Communist Party in Lithuania has caused alarm in Moscow.